

# CENTRAL COAST DRAGON BOAT ASSOCIATION

## SAFETY GUIDELINES

(updated June 2025)

### Introduction:

The Central Coast Dragon Boat Association (CCDBA) is committed to the safety of its paddlers and participants. CCDBA demonstrates this commitment through safety guidelines focused on preventing accidents during practices and races.

### Paddler Responsibility:

While CCDBA prioritizes paddler safety, it acknowledges factors beyond its control, such as weather and skill level. Paddlers must recognize inherent risks and safeguard themselves, fellow paddlers, and equipment. Ultimately, each paddler bears responsibility for their safety, necessitating learning safe paddling practices, understanding weather patterns, tides, and dragon boat dynamics.

### General Safety Rules:

- **Waivers and Medical Release: the CCDBA Liability**  
Waiver/Medical Release must be completed prior to boarding the dragon boat for the first time and renewed each year (insurance requirement). Any medical conditions should be brought to the attention of the coach or designee.
- **Illness:** Anyone who is ill, or has symptoms of a contagious illness, should stay away from practices and events. Please respect the health and safety of your teammates. Face masks are always welcome on the boats.
- **New Paddlers:** never get into a dragon boat without first receiving instructions from an experienced dragon boat coach or paddler.
- **Coach and Steersperson Responsibility:** The coach and steersperson are responsible for the safety of the crew and enforcing the rules of safety at all times. This includes ensuring that paddlers are trained in,

understand, and actively implement good safety practices. This also includes ensuring that the boats stay inside the bay (insurance requirement).

- **Steer Requirements:** A trained and qualified Steersperson must be in the boat at all times, either steering or mentoring a steersperson trainee.
- **Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs):** The U.S. Coast Guard and California mandate the presence of Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) aboard the Dragon Boat. CCDBA requires paddlers to wear PFDs at all times, with the exception of brief periods during video recording sessions.
- **Ensure you wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD that meets the following criteria:**
  - Proper size for the wearer
  - Suitable for the activity
  - In good condition
  - Buoyant enough to meet USCG standards
- **No Alcohol:** no person shall be permitted to be on the boat who is under the influence of any non-prescribed substance, including alcohol and recreational drugs. No alcohol is allowed on the boats.
- **Emergency Contact Information:** Each paddler is responsible for updating their own emergency contact information on their TeamSnap profile whenever it changes.
- **Marine Radios and Cell Phones:** there should always be either the marine radio or a cell phone on board and a person designated to be responsible for it. In the event of an emergency: Dial 911 and radio the Harbor Patrol.
- **Harbor Patrol:** VHF 12 on Marine Radio or 805/772-6254 on phone
  - Hours of operation are 6 am-7pm
  - Office hours: 8 am to 5:30 pm, Monday-Friday: (Someone will always answer the phone during these hours).
  - When calling for assistance, state who you are, where you are, and what you need.
- **US Coast Guard:** Channel 16 on Marine Radio 6 am to 7pm, 7 days a week ·
- **Safety and Maintenance Equipment:**
  - Throw Line

- Stored in the paddle locker
- Steers assign throw rope to a bench during

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practices

- Bailers - each boat should have two
- First Aid Kit - kept in dock locker

#### On-the-Boat Safety:

- Paddlers are responsible for their warm-up before getting on the boat and hydration.
- Paddlers will listen to steers and coach's instructions. ● Paddlers will load the boat quietly, quickly and safely, loading from the ends to the center. The seat closest to the stern loads first, to prevent damage to the stern
- Steers and Coach identify themselves and determine the seating.
- The paddler sitting in seat 5 or 6 on the starboard holds the boat while paddlers embark and disembark.
- Paddlers move into and out of the boat at their comfort level; it is up to the paddler to ask for assistance.
- Either the steers, coach or designee will be available to assist paddlers in and out of the boat.
- When assisting, always use wrist to wrist rather than hand to hand assistance.
- The person designated to carry the Marine Radio/Cell phone and throw rope will be announced,
- In case of a capsize, we use the buddy system, so each paddler is responsible for knowing their seat number and benchmate;
- Each person on the boat will count off within the first 5 minutes of leaving the dock.
- Steers are always in charge of boat safety. In the absence of the steers, the coach is in charge of safety.
- In case of an emergency, stay calm, and listen to steers and/or coach.
- Once the boat is loaded, paddlers listen for commands from steers until they turn over practice to the coach.

#### Safety Commands:

- Hands Out: Paddlers hold paddle in front of them, inside arm parallel to deck extended at shoulder height; outside arm holding blade just above the water
- Hold the boat: Bury the paddle into the water, with the wide surface of the blade perpendicular to the boat. This makes the boat quickly lose speed.
  - Brace the boat: Hold the paddle out horizontally with the wide surface of the blade parallel to and just under the water's surface. This prevents the boat from rocking side-to-side
- Draw: Hold the paddle with the wide surface of the blade parallel to the boat then pull the paddle towards the boat. This will move the water under the boat., and move the boat closer to the dock, for example
- Pry: Hold the paddle with the wide surface of the blade parallel to the boat, push the paddle away from the boat. This will move the boat away from the dock, for example.
- Back Paddle: Put the paddle into the water behind the hips and drive it down and pull the blade forward through thru the water
- Let it Ride or Run: Stop paddling and let the boat glide

#### Returning to the dock:

- The steersperson has control and command of the boat • Paddlers listen to the direction of Steers.
- Paddlers disembark in general, from middle to front and middle to back.
- Paddlers unload quietly and quickly and move up the ramp to clear the dock.
- If a boat is being taken out of the water, ten paddlers stay behind to facilitate the removal of the boat.

#### Emergency Procedures:

Should a medical emergency occur on the boat: call 911; steers navigate boat to the closest dock.

#### Person Overboard Procedure:

Three Rules to remember:

1. Stay in the water but with the boat on the starboard side
2. Paddle to land or dock
3. Radio Harbor Patrol if need assistance

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If a person goes overboard (PO) an immediate assessment is made to:

1. Determine the PO's condition
  - a. Who is overboard: name, position in boat (paddler or steers), condition (conscious/unconscious, medical attention needed)
  - b. Throw rope if needed and stay in communication with PO.
  - c. Keep PO calm and get input from them during assessment and plan - Guide PO to the starboard side.
  - d. Note: Under no circumstance should anyone attempt to climb back into the boat in deep water.
2. Determine if the Harbor Patrol is radioed for assistance
  - a. If PO is unable to assist in recovery, harbor patrol is called. If there's any question, call Harbor Patrol.
  - b. When calling harbor Patrol, state who we are, where we are and what we need.
3. Determine the recovery plan
  - a. No Harbor Patrol needed: Coach or Steers determine if the boat goes to land or ladder.
    - i. Land possibilities are: Sand Spit, Coleman beach, Oyster Beach, State Park beach
    - ii. Ladder possibilities for climbing out are: Sub Sea Tours, Morro Bay Yacht club
    - iii. Ladder possibilities for hanging on and waiting for assistance are: T-piers and fuel dock
    - iv. When using ladders, PO needs to be aware of impediments on the lowest rungs of ladder: growth and possible lack of traction.
  - b. Harbor Patrol is called: Coach or Steers follows the direction of the Harbor Patrol.

Other Factors to consider:

4. When PO is steers, the coach assumes command of the boat and will:

- a. Assign a certified steers to take over steering
  - b. Assign another paddler to take over steering
  - c. Take over steering
5. Boat stays with PO until recovery is complete. PO can: a.  
Hang on to the boat and float while boat navigates to safety

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- b. Swim to nearest recovery point (boat follows)
  - c. NOT climb back into boat in deep water
6. When determining recovery plan, Coach or steers needs to consider:
- a. Tide, Wind, Temperature (air and water)
  - b. Boat's location
  - c. Condition of PO

#### Boat Capsize:

- STAY CALM
- Designated carrier of the Marine Radio/cell phone calls Harbor Patrol
- Identify any first responders that may be on the boat including lifeguards.
- Paddlers check on their seatmates; Alert the coach if the benchmate is missing.
- Unconscious paddlers should be supported on their backs, face-up in the water
- Extract anyone trapped under the boat
- Coach designee takes attendance by calling each seat number.
- Turn any person who is unconscious face up
- Reassure crew
- All paddlers to stay with the boat and wait until help arrives

#### Boat swamp/Taking on water:

If the boat begins taking in water:

- Paddlers in the middle of the boat immediately start bailing
- All other paddlers continue to paddle, as directed by steers.

#### Night-time Practices:

Boats will be equipped with running lights and shall be visible throughout paddling practice

### Environmental Conditions:

CCDBA paddlers are not to be on the water when:

- The wind speed exceeds 20 MPH or when steers determine it's not safe
- Lightning is present
- The bay has surface whitecaps

### Boat Maintenance:

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- Boats will be cleaned, if possible prior to practice
- Crew will take turns cleaning the boats: seats, gunwales, at a minimum
- Boats will be scheduled regularly for oiling the seats and gunwales
- Any damage to a boat should be reported immediately to CCDBA Equipment Manager.

### Steers Training:

The CCDBA Board designates a Safety Officer, who is responsible for conducting the steers training program. The Safety Officer may designate qualified Steers Mentors to help train steers volunteers.

Practice coaches are expected to cooperate with steers training at ALL practices. Steers trainees can not steer a boat solo (without a Steers Mentor on board) until the Safety Officer certifies that the trainee is qualified. The Safety Officer is currently Rose Marie Battaglia, surviveoars@gmail.com.

